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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perspectives that second career teachers with prior military career experience bring to the profession of teaching and specifically to the teaching of social studies. The study was organized around five questions relating to the life and career histories of second career teachers, the commonalities in the educational perspectives held by this preservice teacher population, the qualities second career teachers from the military bring to their new profession, the attraction of education for former military personnel, and common elements that might be shared by the subject matter of social studies and military experiences. A life history methodology was used in the main data collection from the four participants' lives. The four case studies were the basis for understanding the patterns relating to family, community, religion, schooling, work, race, class, and gender that emerged as significant themes from the stories of the participants. Each participant is briefly discussed in a separate case. The four case studies are followed by a cross case comparison in which common themes and patterns are discussed. Differences among cases are discussed to elucidate how individual differences were played out in common institutional and career contexts. Contains 33 references. (EH)

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COMMON ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SECOND CAREER TEACHERS AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES

by

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The Problem

A persistent question troubling researchers and policy makers alike is why the core pattern of teaching practices in the social studies and other subject areas has endured over most of the 20th century. Cuban (1991) argues that although there have been small incremental changes in teaching practices, what he calls first order changes, most social studies teachers, as well as teachers in most other subject areas, teach in a fashion similar to that which has persisted throughout the century. This traditional pattern of teaching continues despite voluminous research that calls for change in pedagogical practices, teacher education, and school reform. However, change in teacher practice cannot be expected to come about solely as the result of research based on generalized findings concerning what teachers ought to be doing. This type of research does not speak to the experiences of individual teachers, in particular classrooms, in particular schools (Bolster, 1983). Cuban proposes examining why social studies teachers teach as they do, rather than focusing studies only on how they ought to be teaching. This shift in focus is a recognition that there are many factors influencing teacher action beyond their individual wills to change (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991; Cuban, 1991).

The Study

This study was designed to examine the perspectives that second career teachers with prior military career experience bring to the profession of teaching and in particular the teaching of social

studies. By examining the life histories of second career military teachers through the framework of the development of perspectives and attractions in an institutional and career context, I hoped to provide a better understanding of this important, growing teacher population. The institutional and career focus of this study allowed me to examine the perspectives that teachers bring to their new profession concerning learning, teaching, and knowledge, in order to learn if they may have been influenced by the institutions within which their military and other career experiences were embedded. This lens also allowed me to examine the attraction of teaching, and of the teaching of social studies in particular, of these second career military teachers.

The large number of retiring and former military personnel expressing interest in second careers in education, and in particular, in the social studies will have an impact on education (Feistritzer, 1992; Fernandez, 1993). The nature of the attraction of this population to this particular field and in this particular subject area was explored by this study. Specifically, the study examined what perspectives select second career social studies teachers from the military bring with them into teacher education programs and eventually into the classroom, which then get transformed into traditional pedagogical practices?

The Study Questions

The following questions were used to organize this study:

1) What perspectives concerning learning, teaching, and knowledge, can be discerned from the life and career histories of select second career teachers entering teaching from the military?

2) Are there commonalties in the educational perspectives held by this segment of our preservice teacher population? Are there differences in perspectives, and if so, on what might they be based?

3) Is there evidence in these life histories to support the assumptions of governmental and educational leaders concerning the qualities second career teachers from the military bring to their new profession? Are there unanticipated qualities that show up in the data but are not discussed in the current literature?

4) Why are former military personnel choosing second careers in teaching? What is the attraction to this profession and what is it based on?

5) What do the subject matter subculture of social studies and experiences in the military have in common?

The Literature

The areas of research used to inform this study continuously grew and changed, in terms of relative importance, as the study progressed. I found that the more I read, the more complex, overlapping and interconnected these areas became and the more difficult it became to write them as separate sections of the literature review. In keeping with the methodological strength and flexibility of a qualitative study, this growth and change continued throughout the data collecting and analysis portions of this project. A brief review of some of that literature appears here.

The literature on second career teachers suggests that the assumptions made about the positive traits they bring to their new profession may be overstated and false (Bullough & Knowles, 1990; Crow, Levine, & Nager, 1990; Novak & Knowles, 1991). Those same

traits, that may make them attractive to potential employers, will also help them to be a conserving influence designed to maintain the status quo in schools (Freidus & Krasnow, 1991; Haipt, 1987). Second career teachers are unlikely to be the agents of second order changes sought by Cuban (1991).

One of those traits may be their understanding of the workings of institutions. Second career teachers who have been successful in one institutional context may transfer those successful perspectives to a new institutional context. There may be an institutional attraction on the part of those seeking careers in new institutions. Institutions such as the military which has been described as both a total institution and a greedy institution may have an even stronger influence on the perspectives developed in those settings (Cosner, 1974; Goffman, 1962; Segal, 1988; Shields, 1988) .

The educational perspectives of second career preservice teachers developed during first career and other life experiences are often well-entrenched and rigid. The apprenticeship model of teacher education, primarily through increased clinical experiences, may act to reinforce those entering perspectives rather than provide challenges to them (Goodman 1985,1986; Grossman, 1991; Schumer & Knowles, 1991). One of those entering perpsectives appears to be an overiding belief in the transferability of personal experience (Haipt, 1987).

The knowledge base for teaching contains both personal and professional knowledge (Tamir, 1991). Professional knowledge is further divided into content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Without a strong

foundation in content knowledge, teachers are left to using personal knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Calderhead, 1991). It is this general, naive pedagogical knowledge developed during the apprenticeship of observation and reinforced during apprenticeship type clinical experiences, coupled with personal knowledge from career and life experiences, that second career teachers bring to their teaching career. This knowledge is limiting and conserving both for the teacher and for the students they come into contact with.

The literature suggests that this may be even more of a problem in the social studies than in other certification areas. The way the field is conceived and certification is granted, makes it unlikely that teachers will have adequate subject matter preparation (NCSS, 1994). Social studies teachers often have a strong background in only one of the social science disciplines. This may further limit the content knowledge available to the teacher and the students as they may be limited to the personal knowledge of their teacher.

The Methodology

Life history research has a long and rich tradition, being used extensively in the 1920's, 30's and 40's in the work of the Chicago School. Sociological life histories of the kind done by members of the Chicago School often focused on constructing the subjects' stories based on how institutions, events and significant people helped to shape the subjects' definitions of themselves and the views or perspectives they held (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in life histories. Much work is currently being done on developing new methodologies and refining old methods for reconstructing life histories out of the oral

biographies told to researchers (Rosenthal, 1993). Much of this new work is being done in connection with the study of teaching and teacher education, especially in relation to the intersection of biography and educational institutions (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1992). This research is part of that growing tradition.

In keeping with the historical strength of this tradition, a life history methodology was used in the main data collection phase of this project. As the researcher, I attempted to capture the important experiences of the four participants' lives, and as much as possible, in their own words, the meanings that were attached to those experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Through the telling of the stories, the participants made explicit the implicit meanings that life has held for them (Widdershoven, 1993). Through eliciting operations I attempted to get at the participants' emic perspectives of themselves as educators (Harris, 1976). I used a career history and institutional biography focus to elicit the perspectives and attractions these second career military preservice teachers brought to teacher education programs.

My constructions of the life histories were based on the life stories as they were related to me. From these, four case studies were developed. The case studies were the basis for understanding the social phenomena of interest to this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I searched for patterns to emerge from the data in the life histories (Patton, 1990). In addition to the military, influences of family, community, religion, schooling, work, race, class, and gender all emerged as significant themes from the stories the participants told.

The participants selected for this study were chosen by a purposeful sampling procedure that provided information-rich cases for the life histories (Patton, 1990). Selection of the participants was based on prototypes developed from responses to A Survey of Army Personnel Interested in Teaching (Feistritzer, 1992), and on accessibility and location. The prototypes did not represent any particular individual but were created from aggregate data. The prototypes, and hence the participants chosen, were typical of people with prior military career experience who are interested in teaching (Patton, 1990).

Each participant is briefly discussed in a separate case. The four case studies are followed by a cross case comparison in which the common themes and patterns across the cases are discussed. In addition, differences among the cases are discussed in a way that elucidates how individual differences were played out in common institutional and career contexts.

The Cases

The Coaching Santa Claus. Paul Arnold is a forty year old, second career preservice teacher, recently retired from a twenty year career as a senior chief petty officer in the Navy. He currently resides with his two children, Peter, 11 and Heather, 7, on a seventy-seven acre, family-owned home in upstate New York. Paul is in the process of completing his teacher's certification program in secondary social studies at a private college in upstate New York. He is in the middle of a one year, half-time internship in the Iroquois School District, a wealthy suburban district in upstate New York. His student teaching experience is in Advanced Placement (AP), 11th

grade United States History classes with a male cooperating teacher who is a veteran of the Iroquois school system. Paul recently completed a shorter term experience at Mohawk Middle School in the Iroquois district, where he spent two periods a day for three weeks in a middle school classroom.

In Paul's case, the three institutional or career contexts that appeared to have the greatest impact on his perspectives and attractions are family, prior schooling, and his military career experiences. Those are the three I will discuss in this section.

Paul's perspectives concerning education were affected by both positive and negative examples of what education can do. From his experience of dull rote memorization at the Academy, Paul learned how not to conduct his own classroom and how not to organize learning experiences for others. Through his own travel and life experiences, Paul saw the importance of making connections between what one is learning in school and what one is experiencing in one's own life. Only then, does he feel, can learning be meaningful.

In terms of how he should put his role as a teacher into practice, Paul relied heavily on his military experiences as an instructor, counselor, and volunteer worker in the schools. His perspectives about a teacher's role were also affected by his experiences as a parent and as a coach working with young people.

Paul's view that knowledge is all around us in multiple forms comes from his life experiences. It is closely tied to the idea that school knowledge has to be connected with real world knowledge. As Paul says, many of things he learned in geography classes made little sense until he had actually traveled to the places he had

studied. In addition, Paul sees knowledge as having both instrumental and intrinsic value.

In terms of subject matter attraction, it appears that Paul was more interested in teaching than in necessarily teaching social studies. He had toyed with the idea of early childhood education and English as possible alternatives. His decision to teach social studies seemed to be determined more by how his previous coursework would allow him to complete a teaching certification program in a efficacious manner than by a love of the social studies, although the attraction to social studies was certainly there.

The Structured Conservative. Sam Schultz is a forty year old preservice teacher who has recently completed his student teaching experience. Sam entered this student teaching experience as part of his undergraduate teacher certification program at one of the state colleges in western New York after a thirteen and a half year career in the Air Force. His pre- professional field experience encompassed both a middle school and high school component, under the auspices of cooperating teachers Ronald Demking, at the tenth grade level and Martha Stuart, at the eighth grade level. Weymouth Cambridge Central School houses grades K through 12 and is located in a rural section of southwestern New York State.

In looking at Sam's educational perspectives in relation to his life history, there are some strong patterns and themes. Sam's early family influences, the memories of former teachers and educational experiences, and Sam's military career all appear to have had an impact on his entering and developing educational perspectives.

In Sam's view of the learner and how one learns best, the

overriding themes appear to be structure, discipline and standards. Sam attributes the academic success he had in high school to both the structure of the school and the structure of his home life. Once he left home for college and those structures were no longer in place, Sam experienced difficulty. Sam again found structure in the military, and he felt that he and others benefited from that structure. Sam sees one of his roles in the classroom as provider of the structure students need to be successful.

Closely connected to structure is discipline. Sam's parents were strict disciplinarians and although Sam resented that, he has a sense that he turned out all right, so it must have been the right thing to do. Sam often discussed the lack of discipline among students as a problem.

The third theme, standards, is also something found in various experiences in Sam's life, but it may come primarily from the military. Sam feels someone has to set clear goals and standards, as well as ways of measuring whether or not they are attained. In terms of education, this manifests itself in Sam's support for national and state curriculum standards, as well as his support for New York State Regents testing.

Sam's lack of preparation in subject matter may be one of the reasons he talks about personal qualities and his experiences as the main tools of his teaching. It has been quite some time since Sam has had coursework in many of the areas he is required to teach, and his own coursework in other areas is yet to come. Sam was attracted to teaching primarily as a result of his positive experiences as an instructor in the military. This attraction appears to be an attraction

to teaching, not an attraction to teaching social studies or any other particular subject.

One of the implications of Sam's view of education is that he may act as a conserving force, as opposed to being an agent of change. One gets the sense that Sam's belief that "things worked for me, and I turned out OK," will lead him to seek to reproduce and model those same experiences for his students. The other aspect of his perspectives that could lead to his role as a conserving force is his view that an occupation in teaching is prestigious and well paid, with good benefits and working conditions. A person entering a new occupation with such an attitude is not apt to seek to change the conditions of his employment.

Time to Give Back. Kathy O'Malley is a thirty-two year old mother of two who is expecting her third child. With her husband Thomas, she lives in Knickerbocker, New York, in a building owned and occupied by the family's funeral home business. In September of 1994, after completing three weeks of her student teaching experience at an upstate New York middle school, Kathy dropped out of her MAT program for both family and personal reasons. Kathy felt the student teaching experience, which was part of her teacher certification program at a private upstate college, was taking her away from two of the things that she loved the most, her family and her opportunities to fly. Kathy is currently active in the Air National Guard and is a navigator on some of their flights. This is a job she intends to continue until she reaches her twenty year retirement date. She is currently half way to this goal.

In looking for connections between Kathy's life history and the

perspectives and attractions she has concerning education, the two ideas coming most readily to the forefront are of responsibility to others, and fostering the attitude that there is a world of opportunity out there. For Kathy, those ideas are closely tied to the values she learned from the institutions of family, community, and religion.

The role of facilitator and encourager for others, particularly young girls pursuing their dreams, also motivates Kathy to a life of giving back. Kathy attempted to do this by becoming a teacher. Through that vehicle, she hoped to work with young women, with whom she feels a special affinity. She feels young girls in our society are not encouraged to pursue their options, as she had been as a young girl, and may not even be aware of the options available to them. "I want to get under their skin and tell them they can do anything they want."

The idea of giving back through teaching did not come about for Kathy until late in her military career. Even during the intensive summer session prior to student teaching, Kathy was beginning to have doubts about how she was going to pull all of the various aspects of her life together. She was aware of the opportunity costs involved in pursuing one particular direction as opposed to another. The tensions between the institutions of military, family and schooling were resolved temporarily when she withdrew from the teacher education program. "I didn't realize until this fall that being a mother is more important. I cherish the fact that I am a mother. This is more important right now." As a result, Kathy continues to fly, part time, with the Air National Guard, while giving back to her own children the encouragement and opportunities she received as a

child. In addition, Kathy has found a way to give back to the church and school community that had been so influential in her youth, and in fact, continues to be today.

Kathy was a woman, who moved from one occupation traditionally dominated by men to another: this cannot be overlooked. The military, the family, and schooling are all institutions requiring a great deal from all who operate within them, and the family may even be a greedier institution for women than for men (Cosner, 1974). This would seem to be particularly true for women like Kathy, coming from a large nuclear family and having lived in close circles with extended family members. The institution of family has had a very different impact on Kathy than on the other participants in this study.

Just Fell Into It. Albert Mascogo is a thirty-three year old African American army veteran, who left the service after seven and a half years. Albert has recently completed his student teaching experience at an inner city high school in the southern tier of New York, as part of his teaching certification program at the local state university. Albert accomplished this as part of a MAT program in social studies education, which he hopes to complete in the spring of 1995.

The connections between Albert's perspectives and attractions concerning a career in teaching and his life story, show this case to be different from the others in this study in the way the themes and patterns emerged. The institutional contexts I will focus on in this section of the case study are family, schooling (including his current schooling in college and student teaching), and his military career.

Albert's perspectives concerning learning and the learner appear to be most influenced by his current educational experiences. He refers to his own learning process in his master's level classes as the way he would like his students to approach things. Albert readily admits he did not have expectations upon entering the classroom concerning what his students could and could not do. As a result, Albert's views in this area were not as well entrenched as those of the other participants upon entering the school context.

Albert sees his role in the classroom as that of a coordinator who facilitates and encourages his students to learn on their own. This appears to be based on feelings about how he learns best which are transferred to his teaching situation. Albert sees his role in the classroom as one of providing experiences students need for survival in the real world. This is more oriented to social skills than academics.

In Albert's own education, particularly in college at Kent State, his military training, and his teacher education program, he pursued avenues that appeared to have instrumental value for him. In college, he chose the communications field, hoping it would lead to employment, and upon graduation, he actively sought this in California. When that venture did not meet his expectations, he entered the military, in hope of getting more useful training, in the field of electronics. When he left the military and learned how outdated and useless his training there had been, he decided to get into a teacher education program. Albert is already considering using his teaching experience as a springboard to higher education or to administration.

Albert's comments regarding his attraction to teaching is the same type of answer he gave when questioned about his decision to enter the military: "I just kind of fell into it." Albert feels one of the attractions of teaching was that he knew he could do it well. He said this was more of a gut feeling than anything else. It was also based on his belief that he had done a lot of reading so he knew he had information to talk about.

This same sense of "[falling] into it" is present in Albert's preference for the social studies over other possible subject areas. This was particularly interesting for someone with a communications background. He expressed an interest in social studies, had taken some courses in the subject and felt a program could be completed in a reasonable time frame. However, Albert probably could have completed a program in English or English as a second language just as well, in the respect that it was the act of teaching that he felt he could do well and not necessarily the teaching of a particular subject, when he made the decision to enter a teacher education program.

Cross Case Discussion

The fact that the four participants had similar institutional and career experiences was the basis for undertaking this study. The life histories themselves attest to the similarity of the institutional and career contexts in which the participants have lived, and are currently living. The participants had learned, in a sense, the cultural codes that certain institutions required of them on an institutional level (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993). As a result, they developed some intersubjective understandings about learning, teaching and knowledge from these shared institutional experiences.

Given these common experiences, of particular note are the different effects on the participants. It is here, where the interplay of idiosyncratic aspects of personal histories interact with similar institutional career experiences, and current contexts, that the findings of interest manifest themselves. Why does one participant focus primarily on his experiences with school-aged children and military recruits as the core of his perspectives, while another looks primarily at what appears to have worked best for himself as a student? Why does another enact perspectives that he himself hated as a child, while still another looks to the same family and societal responsibilities she has always valued?

Each participant has been greatly influenced by past experiences as a way of understanding and operating in new contexts. There are individual differences, despite the similarity of their institutional contexts. These findings suggest, however, in spite of these differences, the perspectives and attractions the participants bring to the teaching profession are a conserving force and will likely lead to the reproduction of traditional classroom practice as discussed by Cuban (1991). As the participants entered schools, there was a feeling on both their own parts and the parts of those with whom they worked that experiences in institutional contexts perceived to be similar gave these participants the cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977) to fit and function in schools without major dissonance to either their own perspectives or to current school culture. This expectation suggests a conserving effect on both the institution and the growth of the individual teacher.

The influence of past experiences is only a piece of the puzzle in terms of developing perspectives and attractions. The context in which one is presently operating also influences what one thinks is an appropriate course of action in a given situation. As a result, there are pressures to replicate the existing practices of the current context. The usefulness of entering perspectives is determined by their perceived relevance to the current situation. Often times the current situations people find themselves in bring about specific episodic images or memories of similar events experienced in the past or even a conglomeration of images from perceived similar events as discussed by Calderhead & Robson, 1991. These images or memories are used to help determine the appropriate action to take in the perceived similar context (Goodman, 1988).

From this view, it is not surprising that traditional perspectives, and the practices that result from them, are often maintained in schools by new teachers, and may be particularly so by second career teachers. Second career teachers, in addition to schooling experiences, have other career experiences that they use to create their roles as teachers. In addition, there is evidence in this study to suggest that the perspectives of second career teachers may be well entrenched and less amenable to change than those of first career teachers. This finding supports the similar findings of numerous other studies (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Goodman, 1988; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1993; Novak & Knowles, 1992)

Conclusions and Implications

Although the conclusions from any study are tentative, I have decided to focus on three that I believe are of great importance to

the field of social studies teacher education and are directly related to Cuban's (1991) concerns about the maintenance of traditional pedagogical practices in social studies classrooms. The first issue deals with the limitations of learning to teach through an apprenticeship model, which characterizes both the military and teacher education experiences of the study participants. The second issue is the impact of a limited knowledge base in the teaching of social studies on one's ability to teach. The third issue is the potential for erroneous common assumptions made concerning second career teachers and the supposed advantages they bring to the profession.

The three issues around which the conclusions of this study center are more connected than a separate treatment here might suggest. The apprenticeship model of teacher education sets limitations on one's ability to learn to teach, as it is based on the assumption that what is happening in schools ought to continue. Learning through the apprenticeship model is closely linked to learning on-the-job, as the participants in this study did during their prior career in the military. Socialization into the military, as experienced by the participants in this study, was based on either internalization or situational adjustment strategies (Lacey, 1977) that maintained the status quo and carried the message that things are as they ought to be.

These apprenticeship type experiences led the participants of this study to believe that teaching was merely a technical and physical act and not necessarily an intellectual, decision-making process. They viewed teaching as something they did without

problematizing or reflecting upon what was being taught. The participants felt that if as teachers they could develop skill proficiency at the physical aspects of teaching, this would give the outward appearance that they knew what they were doing, and all would assume that they were good at it. These assumptions that many second career teachers bring to teaching, reinforce the notion that things are the way they should be.

Further these apprenticeship based experiences underscore the belief that the participants could teach with a limited content knowledge base. Under the apprenticeship model, content knowledge takes on less importance than pedagogical knowledge. The question becomes how, not what and why. This general, naive pedagogical knowledge developed during the apprenticeship of observation and reinforced during apprenticeship clinical experiences, coupled with the personal knowledge from the career and life experiences of the participants, characterize the knowledge that many second career teachers bring to their teaching career. This knowledge is limiting and conserving both for the teachers and the students with whom they come into contact.

This study suggests that this limited knowledge base is even more of a problem for the area of social studies than for other certification areas. The way in which the field is conceived and the manner in which certification is granted makes it unlikely that teachers will have adequate subject matter preparation. Social studies teachers often have a strong background in only one of the social science disciplines. This will further limit the content knowledge available to the teachers and their students, as the

teachers rely on their personal knowledge. This in turn limits their ability to teach.

The assumption of the transferability of prior experience leads to the appearance of a smooth and seemingly unproblematic transition from a first career to a career in teaching. It is this ability to learn the form of what it means to be a teacher that makes these second career people attractive to those doing the hiring for school districts. Yet this may be counterproductive to bringing about the type of second order changes in teaching that Cuban (1991) and others discuss in the literature. A quote by Sam's cooperating teacher, Ronald Demking, states most clearly how what second career teachers bring to teaching works to maintain traditional practices in the classroom and sets limits on one's ability to teach. "Sam understands the institutional restraints on what he should do and should not do. He understands his role in the institution... Sam got into the routine of teaching quickly."

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